

# Operation Smile: Building Resilient Health Systems in Africa

## WHAT WE DO

Operation Smile is a global nonprofit bridging the gap in access to essential surgeries and health care, starting with cleft surgery and comprehensive care. Through our efforts in **health system strengthening**, we aim to build sustainable health systems that ensures long-term, quality care for all.

- ✓ **Geographic Reach:** In Africa, Operation Smile delivers medical care for patients and educational programs for health workers in 12 countries.

DRC	Malawi
Egypt	Morocco
Ethiopia	Mozambique
Ghana	Rwanda
Kenya	South Africa
Madagascar	Tanzania



- ✓ **Volunteers:** Operation Smile has around 740 volunteers in Africa that dedicate their time and effort to provide the best possible care to patients living with cleft conditions.

## THE NEED

- **High Disease Burden:** Over 30% of African diseases require surgery, underlining the urgent need for improved access to surgical care.
- **Disproportionate Burden:** Sub-Saharan Africa has a higher burden of surgical disease, with 38 DALYs (disability-adjusted life years) lost per 1,000 populations.
- **Scarce Health Workforce:** Africa faces a severe shortage of medical professionals, with only two doctors and 11 nurses/midwives per 10,000 people.

## OUR STRATEGY: HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING IN AFRICA

- ✓ **Education Programs at the Core:** Operation Smile prioritizes education programs as the best way to strengthen local health systems
- ✓ **Global Collaboration in Surgical Programs:** Each surgical program fosters collaboration among providers worldwide, facilitating knowledge exchange and innovation crucial for capacity building.
- ✓ **Addressing Structural Barriers:** Our efforts in health policy & advocacy and health infrastructure & equipment tackle structural obstacles to care, strengthening health systems.
- ✓ **Research & Innovation Driving Decision-Making:** Research & innovation efforts help us understand barriers to care, identify the causes of cleft conditions, and improve our program design.
- ✓ **Holistic Patient Care Beyond Surgery:** Operation Smile embraces a holistic care approach, extending support beyond surgery to encompass dental, speech, nutrition, and psychological programs for full patient rehabilitation and social inclusion.

## PARTNERSHIPS

In Africa, Operation Smile works closely with local medical leaders, health ministries, universities, accrediting institutions, NGOs, and international organizations.

Our key partners in Africa include the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) and the College of Anesthesiologists of East, Central, and Southern Africa (CANECSA). We also collaborate with the American Heart Association (AHA) and the World Federation Societies of Anesthesia (WFSA).

*Together, we are dedicated to training the next generation of health care professionals.*